

ISSUE 1924

“In Support of Progress” Newsletter

A Three Way Shuffle

Size of Parliament

The AFL and Mac Pt

**Another political
conference**

Date: 2 September 2019

A Three-way shuffle

Almost flying under the radar was the recent announcement that, as of today, three bureaucracy heads were going to lose their existing jobs and gain new ones.

In a three-way shuffle, Mike Pervan, a highly regarded health bureaucrat, loses Health and gains Communities Tasmania, an area he was once responsible for before the department broke into two, Ginna Webster loses Communities Tasmania and gains Justice, where she was once a Deputy Secretary, and Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, a one-time Treasury officer and bean-counter, loses Justice and gains Health.

In announcing this move, the Premier gave no reasons other than to suggest that Pervan would be of value in delivering on affordable housing, which is not a good enough reason at all, unless he is saying that Webster couldn't?

The third step is the interesting one, because Morgan-Wicks has been moved from an area in which she had no background or experience to another where her knowledge is equally limited/non-existent. The question is WHY?

Secrecy seems to be a hallmark of this government, and the lack of a satisfactory explanation only leads to conjecture, such as:

Has a Minister, such as the new Minister for Health and/or the Justice Minister and/or the Minister for Human Services complained that they could not get on with their head of department?

Has some policy framework been undermined somehow, such as affordable housing, and the government has felt obliged to move in a heavy hitter?

Has some personal behavior occurred which needs to be “moved on”?

Has one of the bureaucrats asked to be moved?

Has the health bureaucrat refused to accept budget cuts, as demanded by the government, knowing what that would do to the health system, and the government (or should I say Treasury) has instead installed a bean-counter to count beans?

This type of move does not happen for no reason. Something has triggered it, and a proper explanation should be given.

The move has not led to any questioning from any quarter, which is strange. This is a big step, involving two of the biggest departments, and also two of the most sensitive. If the government is throwing out health policy and hospital administration guidance for the sake of counting beans, and if it thinks this move will not have consequences, then they have another thing coming.

Health is far too political a topic.

The size of Parliament

I have been invited this coming Thursday to appear before the Parliament's House of Assembly Restoration Committee and talk to a submission made recently to them, and to a document published by me back in 2011, regarding restoring the size of Parliament, from the 25 at present to the 35 it once was.

The proposal is two-fold:

1. to restore the numbers in the House of Assembly to 35; and
2. to create 7 electorates of 5 members (presently it is 5 electorates of 5 members)

The first part has almost unanimous support from all commentators, including at various times the political parties individually and the local media. The parliament as presently constituted is the poorer for its low numbers, both in its ability to operate, its standard of performance, and its capacity to be a parliament (as distinct from government).

That said, even though it may well be supported "in principle", it will no doubt be opposed by both major parties, saying "Now is not the right time". Funny thing is they are probably right, not because of any circumstances that may be occurring now, but because it is never the right time. It is the all-too-convenient killer response to any suggestion to reform Parliament. And it is a cop-out, pure and simple.

The second part involves moving away from federal boundaries, just like every other state has, maintaining the existing quota, which would be of comfort to many, while at the same time establishing smaller electorates with a greater community of interest. Having 7 members to service an electorate is overkill, in my view.

Football and Macquarie Point

I suspect I am one of the very few people in this State that does not believe we should be pushing to have an AFL side. Maybe I am not alone, maybe those that play a sport other than football, or who do not play sport, may have a similar view.

Apart from the fact as to whether the numbers would stack up long term, the side would need to have a base, wouldn't it?...and where might that be? It would need to play half of its home games in Hobart and half in Launceston, which means 5 games each. It would end up being an expensive novelty, limited resources would need to be dedicated to it, and that would take away not only from the local and regional leagues of that sport, but funding for other more appropriate government activities. The unintended consequences...

It's not that the AFL is crying poor, its just that they are not interested. Nor, as far as I can see, will they be, no matter which heavyweights argue the platitudes

Still, let the flight of fancy continue. One such thought was to build a brand new stadium at Macquarie Point. That would have given our friends down at the Point a jolt. What? A plan? Another master plan reset? What about the reconciliation park? And the veggie patch and the tin shed? We may have to move again? After all we have spent on refurbishment - for ourselves!

Never fear, it wont happen. What with planning schemes, traffic studies, zoning issues, etc such a project could be held up for years, even if it did get the green light.

Meanwhile, maybe the Authority could be renamed the Refurbishment Authority. They do enough of it!

The latest Labor conference

As Party delegates wend their weary way homewards after another party conference, they would be dwelling on the words “We need to listen more”, and “We need to get back to our base”.

These words are said at every state conference, and there is no reason to think they will not receive the exact same attention that they have received in the past – lip service. Because in this day and age they are meaningless.

Perhaps the word “base” needs to be defined, because by its very nature, it suggests that some people are “of the base” while others are “not of the base”.

Who might be excluded from this Labor base? Who has not been listened to? Well, for a start, most people in the regions have been excluded. Forestry workers have been sacrificed, mine workers are confused (eg the Adani debate), those in primary industry have not heard a peep (e.g orchadists and markets, dairies and milk prices, farmers and drought), and these industries would be the backstay for most rural and regional towns. Even workers in manufacturing, dependent on cheap and reliable power for their livelihood, would be questioning the party’s energy policy. And the Party’s response? (.....)

As former Premier Lennon has observed, to those in the regions, Labor now appears to be a city-based party, dealing with city-based issues.

It is a question not just for Labor, but for all political parties. Who makes up the base? Personally, I think it is the wrong question. I believe a far more fundamental question is “What do you stand for? What drives your policies?” And asking that question can lead to some interesting responses. Principles, or pragmatics? The “base” - ie the public - will respond accordingly.

While Labor is gnashing its teeth, and flailing itself with whips, the results of the last election should provide some comfort and some interesting insights.

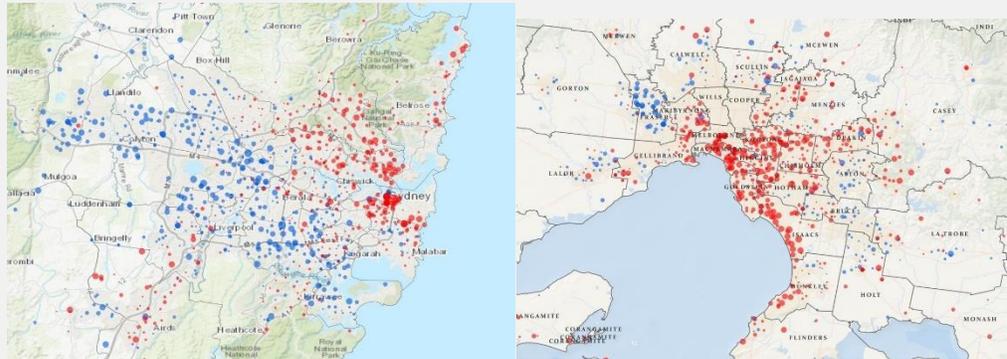
1 Labor did not lose (net) seats in NSW, SA or WA. In fact, in Victoria it gained two seats. So Labor’s loss is not simply a policy failure. Because it was not a failure in those states.

2 Labor lost 2 seats in regional Queensland and two seats in regional Tasmania, and in the latter case after a divisive north vs south campaign. So regional issues were important, and determined the outcome.

3 The primary vote across the nation for both Labor and the coalition fell. It wasn’t a case of one gained, another lost. Neither can derive comfort.

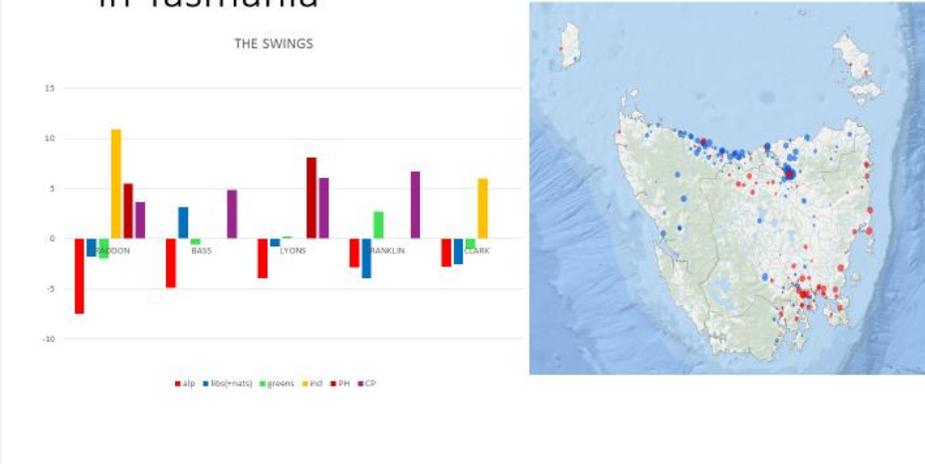
	alp	lib/nat	green	other
2016	34.8	42.1	10.0	13.1
2019	33.3	41.4	10.4	14.8
Gain/loss	-1.5	-0.7	+0.4	+1.7

4 In the cities, Labor gained ground in Liberal-held seats, yet the Liberals gained in Labor-held seats. The maps show the swing to Labor (in red) and to the Liberals (in blue) in both Sydney and Melbourne. If there is such a thing as a base, it is changing.



5 In Tasmania, the regional effect is seen quite clearly. Labor trailed in the 3 regional seats, losing the two northern seats of Bass and Braddon. Lyons was complicated by the implosion of the Liberal candidate. Generally speaking, the swing was against both major parties.

The Election Result – H of R Seats - the swing - in Tasmania



In summary, the major political parties are losing support, and voters are turning to alternative options. The blancmange approach – tell them what they want to hear – is just not good enough, and it is failing. It is in fact a turn-off. Just ask Bill!

The enunciation of core values by political parties is important, and far more important than the tactics of the day. Listening to people is only valuable if they are **beyond** the base, otherwise one is only talking to a smaller and smaller audience of believers.

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